

Devastation in Dixie

100 Year Flood Wipes out Neighborhoods, Farms and Infrastructure in Southern Utah

ST. GEORGE — Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. toured flood-ravaged Washington County during the second day of the massive floods of January 2005 and issued an executive order declaring the area in a state of emergency.

"Flying over (the flooded region) was breathtaking. I didn't expect to see damage to this extent. It's unprecedented," Huntsman said during an afternoon news conference at the Washington County Commission chambers.

"You've got to see it firsthand to believe it," the governor told the Deseret News.

The governor's decision dovetails with a similar announcement issued by Washington County officials the day before. The executive order activated the Utah National Guard and other state resources to help deal with the devastation.

Both the Santa Clara and Virgin rivers were swollen beyond recognition, fueled by unrelenting rainfall and a rapidly melting snowpack in the surrounding mountains. Construction crews worked nonstop trying to build berms and clear mounds of debris that were piling up around bridges and diverting water toward a long stretch of houses.

The Santa Clara River gobbled up at least 25 homes in Washington County. Most of the lost homes were in Santa Clara and Green Valley, near downtown St. George. One of the homes destroyed in Santa Clara was a new house whose owners were three weeks away from moving in.

"We were able to evacuate everyone, but some owners weren't home, so we tried to save

what we could for them after making a forced entry," said Marc Mortensen, St. George city assistant manager. "Three homes in a cul-de-sac fell into the river, one right after the other. It was really sad."

Damage assessments continued to come in for weeks and

Residents of the hardest-hit areas also were without power, sewer and water services for the time being, and everyone in the city was being asked to conserve water, Mortensen said.

"All that water goes down the drain, and we've had some sewers backing up. We don't want that," he said. "We are also operating on a shoestring right now since we don't know the



This aerial view shows that the destruction was not limited to residential areas. Agricultural and recreation land was also lost in the ominous



Very little evidence remains of what used to be a large home and yard.

condition of our wells in the Gunlock area, and Quail Creek is off line, Mortensen added during the last day of flooding."

Several bridges in St. George were either destroyed or structurally compromised by the floodwaters that were clogged with chunks of huge trees and jagged pieces of houses.

Access to Gunlock on U-18 was completely cut off, prompting emergency workers to

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Cary Peterson Honored for 30 Years Public Service

Cary G. Peterson retired in late December after 12 years as Utah Commissioner of Agriculture and Food and 20 years before that as a state representative.

During presentations at the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food in mid-January and at the Utah Water Quality Board meeting in late January, Peterson was honored for his great accomplishments protecting Utah's food supply and water quality.

"I'm just the tip of the iceberg," remarked Peterson. "I've been fortunate to work with many great professionals who have done the 'real' work."

But Peterson has done a great deal of "real" work himself.

- He served as the Chair of the Utah Soil Conservation commission for 12 years
- He served as chair of the Utah Nonpoint Source Task Force six of his 12 years, alternating with the Utah Division of Water Quality director
- He was a founding member of the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development

- He was appointed by Utah Governor Michael O. Leavitt in 1998 to the Quality Growth Commission
- He served as a leader of the Utah Governor's Watershed Initiative under Governor Olene S. Walker from November 2003 - December 2004.
- He worked tirelessly on behalf of Utah

farmers and Ranchers in Utah and nationally as part of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture.

Peterson plans to spend more time with his family and helping his son manage the family ranch in Central Utah and a recently acquired piece of ranch property in Southwest Wyoming.



UDAF Public Information Officer, Larry Lewis (left), presents Peterson with photograph titled "Happy Trails" in January as one of his going away gifts from Department Employees

“Floods” continued from Front

ask a private helicopter pilot for help. Pilot Jeremy Johnson helped evacuate people and transported crews and emergency equipment in and out of waterlogged sections of the county.

By late evening on the second day of flooding, officials were trying to blast an old concrete barrier out of the Santa Clara River with ammonium nitrate in an attempt to open another channel away from threatened homes.

The front nine holes on the Southgate golf course in St. George were destroyed, while the first three holes on the Sunbrook golf course were damaged, Mortensen said. Five city parks are gone, as are miles and miles of walking trails and bridges.

Hundreds of people turned out to help fill sandbags to place around houses in Bloomington, Green Valley and Santa Clara. Traffic in and out of the two cities is restricted in numerous places, and many homes received flood damage.

Jill Ence, whose home is in Santa Clara, said she was hoping and praying the river wouldn't turn her way.

“We've lived here 13 years and never worried about water,” Ence said. “The river was completely dry for years. It's never been like this.”

The normally sedate Virgin and Santa Clara rivers were clocked at 20,000 and 6,500 cubic feet per second, respectively, producing what officials are calling a 100-year flood.

Water Users' Workshop Set for St. George in March

The annual Utah Water Users' Workshop is set for March 8-9, 2005, in St. George, at the Dixie Center,

The two-day workshop and contingent meetings have steadily grown in popularity over the years. In 2004, the workshop drew about 600 water professionals working in water delivery, water conservation, water quality and water law.

While attendance has grown, so too has the participation of vendors, who now have a large trade show area at the Dixie Center. Moving to the conference center on St. George's south end a few years ago, meant many more vendors from throughout Utah and other states could promote their products and services.

This year's workshop format is the same as it has been for many years. There will be one general session and several concurrent presentation sessions each day. The workshop will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, March 8th, and conclude at 12:50 p.m. on Wednesday, March 9th.

Some of this year's concurrent presentations include “Snow Water Status, Park City/Snyderville Basin Water Issues, Watershed Planning, Ground Water Vulnerability, and History of Utah Water Development.

For more information, contact Allison Barnes (435) 797-2802, or Bob Hill (435) 797-2791.

The cost is \$75.00, including one banquet ticket, before February 25, 2005.

Commissioner Blackham Asks for Ag. Disaster Declaration from Flooding

State and federal agriculture agencies are expressing concern over the loss of farmland and property associated with the recent flooding in Southern Utah.

“I want our farmers and ranchers to know we are devastated over their losses, and we are doing all we can to help them through this tough time,” said Utah Commissioner of Agriculture and Food, Leonard Blackham. “Therefore I am calling for state and federal Agricultural Disaster Declarations because of the damage caused by flooding,” he added.

The declarations will make emergency programs and low interest loans available to farmers and ranchers struck by record flooding.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is currently surveying damage to farmland and farm property and expects to release its damage report next week. Preliminary estimates put the damage to irrigations systems, fencing and lost agricultural land in the millions of dollars.

EPA Announces Air Quality Compliance Program for Animal Feeding Operations

Washington, D.C.-- The Environmental Protection Agency announced in late January an air quality compliance agreement to address emissions from certain animal feeding operations, also known as AFOs. This agreement is part of the Agency's ongoing effort to minimize air emissions from animal feeding operations and to ensure those operations comply with the Clean Air Act and other laws.

“This agreement is a huge step forward,” said Thomas V. Skinner, EPA's Acting Assistant Administrator for Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. “It will allow us to reach the largest number of AFOs in the shortest period of time and ensure that they comply with applicable clean air requirements.”

The purpose of the agreement is to ensure that AFOs comply with applicable environmental requirements and to gather scientific data the Agency needs to make informed regulatory and policy determinations. The agreement will establish an industry-funded emissions monitoring program that will help provide this information, leading to better tools to help the farm industry, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and EPA determine the compliance status of feeding operations.

In recent years, the increased size and consolidation of agricultural operations including poultry, swine and dairy operations have been the focus of an increasing number of citizen complaints and concern about possible health impacts. A 2002 report by the National Academy of Sciences called on EPA to improve its method for estimating emissions from AFOs – a key step in mitigating air pollution from those operations.

The emissions of air pollutants and hazardous substances from certain feeding operations may be subject to requirements of the Clean Air Act and notification provisions of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), and the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA). Though EPA previously has brought Clean Air Act enforcement actions

Farmers and ranchers in the affected areas are encouraged to contact their county FSA office to report losses and sign up for the agency's Emergency Conservation Program (ECP). According to FSA Executive Director, Boyd Critchfield, the program can help impacted land owners remove debris, restore fences, clear irrigation ditches and canals, repair structures, and rehabilitate farmland. Visit: <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov> or contact the Washington County FSA office at (435) 673-2381 or the Iron County FSA office at: (435) 586-7274.

The UDAF can offer two loan programs designed assist farmers in need. The agency's ARDL program can help mitigate damages resulting from natural disasters, and the Rural Rehabilitation Program can help farmers and ranchers restructure debt while landowners are rebuilding their businesses. Information about both programs is available at: <http://ag.utah.gov/mktcons/agloans.html>.

against AFOs, more data are necessary to determine whether operations are in violation, the nature and extent of any violations and the best practices to control industry-wide emissions.

AFO operators participating in the agreement will pay a civil penalty of between \$200 and \$100,000, based on the size and number of farms in their operation, and also will contribute to a fund that will cover the cost of the two-year emissions monitoring program. Qualifying AFOs may sign up to participate within 90 days following publication of the agreement in the Federal Register.

Data from the monitoring program will help EPA develop a method for estimating emissions from different types and sizes of feeding operations. Once these methods have been established, operators will be required to apply for all applicable air permits, install all needed controls, implement all required practices, and otherwise come into full compliance.

Though participating AFOs will not be sued for past violations, provided that they comply with specific conditions, the agreement does not limit EPA's ability to take action in the event of imminent and substantial danger to public health or the environment. AFOs that are the subject of current enforcement actions may be barred from joining the study. The agreement also preserves state and local authorities' authority to enforce local odor or nuisance laws.

EPA will accept public comment on the agreement for 30 days following publication in the Federal Register. For information on how to submit comments, go to <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/agreements/afo>

Utah Watershed Review:

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Irrigation Expo 2005 Set for March 2 in Springville

SPRINGVILLE, UT -- Randall Harward, President and CEO of Harward Irrigation Systems, Inc. announced that IRRIGATION EXPO 2005 will be held on March 2, 2005. He stated, “We are pleased to be able to continue our 13-year sponsorship of Utah’s largest irrigation conference for those interested in better water management and conservation. Attendees will have access to the latest product information and receive technical instruction from many major manufacturers. We anticipate having seventy booths, manned by manufacturer’s representatives who will discuss their products and share their expertise.”

IRRIGATION EXPO 2005, Utah’s premier annual Irrigation Exhibition & Conference will be held Wednesday, March 2, 2005 at the Harward Irrigation/Sprinkler World headquarters, located at 940 South 2000 West, Springville, Utah. This conference is an all-day event consisting of classes conducted by industry professionals, exhibit booths with manufacturer representatives and forums that will discuss current water management and irrigation topics. IRRIGATION EXPO 2005 is open to all farmers, ranchers, landscape architects, contractors, golf course superintendents, government representatives, industry experts, educators and others working in the field of agricultural or landscape irrigation.

IRRIGATION EXPO 2005 is a great opportunity for water users statewide to meet together, see new products, and discuss methods of managing water wisely. More than 40 different classes will be held throughout the day for the 700 participants. The irrigation topics include new pivot developments, nozzle selection, variable speed pumps, irrigation design, water efficiency, irrigation troubleshooting, business management tools and a host of other pertinent subjects. Landscaping classes include: outdoor lighting, pond design and installation, and holiday lighting.

Pre-registration will continue until February 25, 2005, at a cost of \$10.00. Registration at the door will begin at 8:00am, on the day of the conference, at a cost of \$15.00. IRRIGATION EXPO 2005 will include classes, an exhibition, an EXPO T-shirt and a steak lunch. The conference will begin at 8:30am and will conclude at 4:30pm. For more information and to preregister, go online to www.sprinkler.com or call 1-800-451-3201.

About Harward Irrigation Systems, Inc.
Harward Irrigation Systems (HIS) is a privately owned provider of irrigation and water management equipment and services for agricultural, residential, commercial, and municipal applications. HIS operates four Sprinkler World stores and has the largest inventory of irrigation systems and parts in the Intermountain area. HIS also manufactures and distributes the Super-Stand Sprinkler. Additional information about Harward Irrigation Systems, Inc. is available at www.sprinkler.com.

Mark Your Calendars!
2005 NPS Conference set for September
September 27 - 29, 2005 in Salt Lake City at the Sheraton City Centre

Urban nonpoint source pollution will be the major focus this year as the Utah Nonpoint Source Water Quality Conference comes to Salt Lake City for the first time in its 16 year history. “We’re excited about having the conference in Salt Lake City and bringing in sotrmwater and other urban issues,” said Roy Gunnell, conference co-chair.

The theme of the 2005 Utah NPS Conference is “Managing water quality in a growing West.” Smart growth, flood plain management, stormwater and other issues related to NPS water quality will be discussed along with more traditional agricultural and riparian water quality topics. Some potential topics to be addressed include:

- Quality growth in emerging communities- Floodplain management, meander corridors and other related issues in the wake of recent flooding in Southern Utah.
 - Stormwater Phase II current issues of concern.
 - Public information and education programs
 - NPS implementation successes
- A call for presenters will be distributed in March and the conference registration packet and draft agenda will be available early summer. Those documents and other information about the conference will be posted on the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food web site: <http://www.ag.utah.gov/mktcons/npsconf.html>.


National Youth Service Day Set for Mid-April: Volunteers Encouraged

Youth Service America selected the Utah Federation for Youth as the lead state agency for the 2005 National Youth Service Day!

National Youth Service Day is the largest service event in the world. Millions of youth will participate in the 17th annual NYSD.

UFY will engage 400 youth and 10 organizations to participate in service projects for National Youth Service Day.

Plans for National Youth Service Day (NYSD) include statewide service projects, “Youth in Service” recognition awards, and a NYSD celebration event on April 16th.



Check out <http://www.ufyi.org/> for upcoming information.

Watershed Coordinating Council to Meet in March, Discuss Funding Criteria

Statewide Watershed Council To Plan Funding Program

On March 22nd and 23rd, the Utah Watershed Coordinating Council will hold its next meeting at the Snow College campus in Richfield, Utah. This will be a very important meeting for watershed coordinators and watershed representatives to attend because we will be developing guidelines for a new funding program to help pay for watershed coordinator positions and on-the-ground projects.

Recently, the Utah Watershed Coordinating Council received approval for two Congressional earmarks totaling \$400,000. This on-time money was requested specifically to fund the creation of watershed coordinator positions and for on-the-ground restoration and water quality improvement projects on a statewide basis. The Watershed Council in partnership with the

Utah Division of Water Quality is required to submit plans to each of the two federal agencies supplying these funds outlining the intended allocation, distribution, implementation, and evaluation strategies. Input from each watershed coordinator and watershed representative will be needed to help develop the funding strategies and to ensure that these funds reach the local level in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

Please be sure to attend this important meeting of the Watershed Council, and come prepared to discuss ideas for managing and dispersing these new funds.

For more information about the Utah Watershed Coordinating Council or the March meeting in Richfield, please contact Jeff Salt, council co-chair, (801) 485-2550. Email: jeffsalt@greatsaltlakekeeper.org

A Series of Unfortunate Events

Photos Show Destruction over Three Days

Editors Note: The photos below are courtesy of Washington County Extension. These shots of the same property were taken on three consecutive days. They show two homes and a significant amount of farm land being swallowed by the raging waters over a 72 hour period. The raging water drastically changed the stream bank and riparian zone.



The photo to the left was taken on the first main flood day. Notice the two houses at the top left of the picture. Farm ground near the house is starting to be flooded as well.

In the photo from the second day (right), the front house is gone. The third photo (below) shows the second house gone along with the depth of the cut bank. There is a 25 foot cliff there, mainly very sandy soils.



There are many places along the river where these blowouts occurred. Current costs for just infrastructure are close to 90 Million. The NRCS estimates around 60 million for restoring and armoring stream banks to protect structures (bridges and homes). These cost do not include loss of home, land, fence, pipe, access, etc.. The FSA is working to assess these for Ag lands now. For most farmers impacted, the loss of land or in a number of cases sediment loads is a huge issue. Some lost 15+ acres, while others gained 3 feet of sediment over their fields. Many are not sure what to do. They just know they need to do something. We are working to address these issues.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced today the availability of \$6 million in Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) funds to repair watershed impairments caused by the January flooding in areas of Washington and Iron Counties in southwestern Utah. NRCS will provide the funding through the Washington County government, the local project sponsor, who will cover 25 percent of the construction costs. Typical project activity could include removing debris from stream channels, road culverts, and bridges; reshaping and protecting eroded banks; correcting damaged drainage facilities; and reseeding damaged areas.